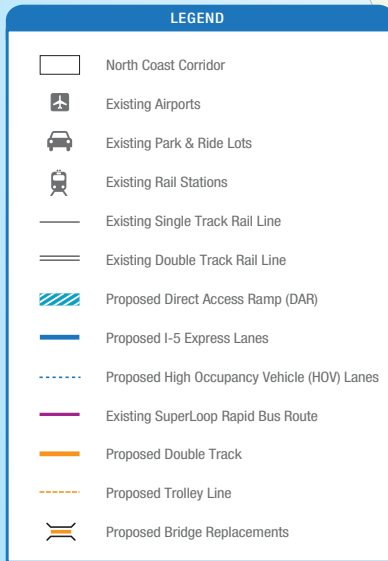


Partnership

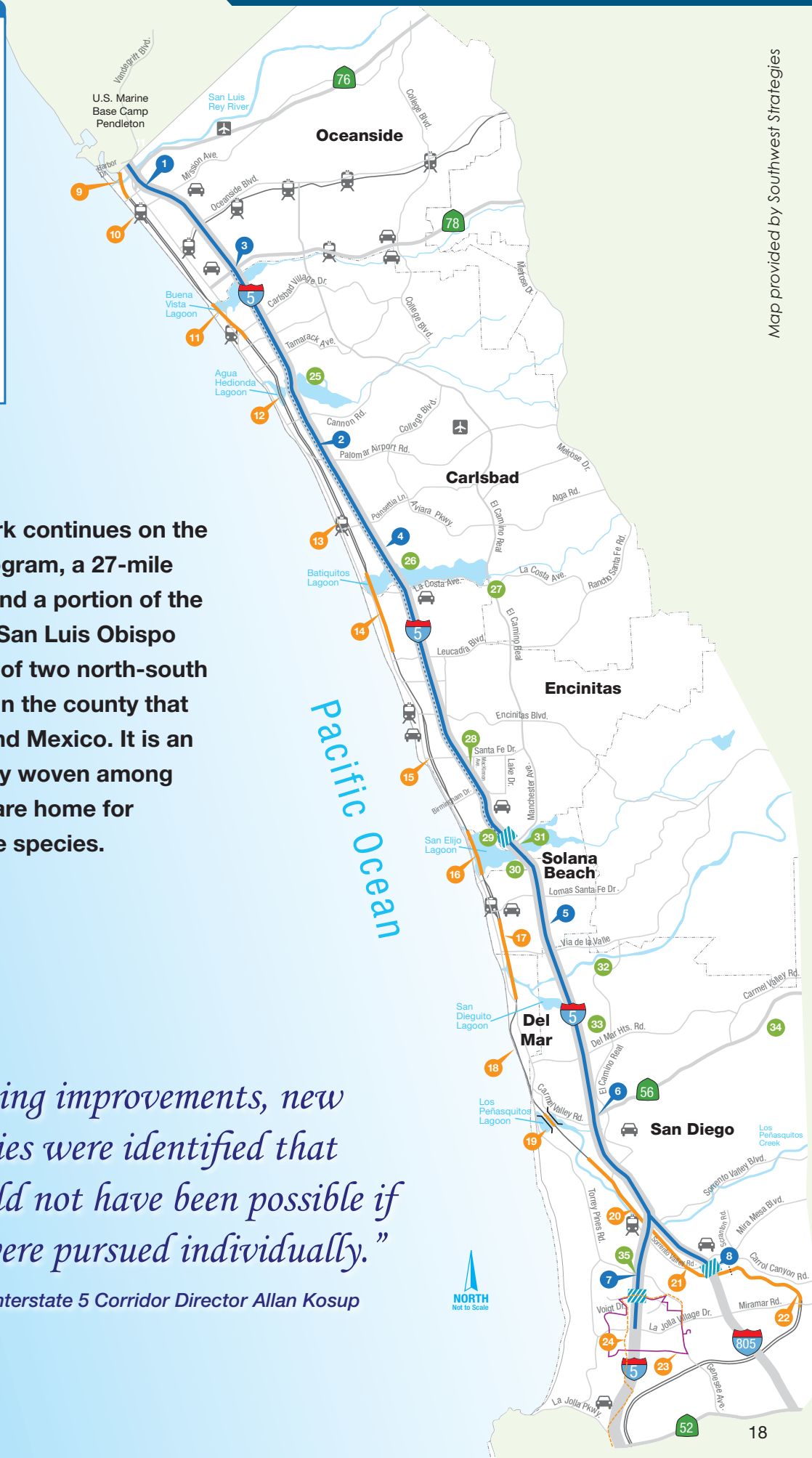
The Foundation for Innovative Improvements in San Diego



In San Diego County, work continues on the North Coast Corridor Program, a 27-mile overhaul of Interstate 5 and a portion of the Los Angeles–San Diego–San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor. This is one of two north-south transportation corridors in the county that links the United States and Mexico. It is an economic lifeline carefully woven among six coastal lagoons that are home for endangered and sensitive species.

“By integrating improvements, new opportunities were identified that otherwise would not have been possible if the projects were pursued individually.”

Caltrans District 11 Interstate 5 Corridor Director Allan Kosup



With project approvals now in place, the team is eager to begin construction in 2015. Similar to the integrated planning approach, the first construction project will be a \$500 million project made up of lagoon, rail, and highway improvements. Caltrans will administer the contract, and the project should be open to traffic by 2018.

The project's sensitive location and the need to maintain and enhance coastal access required oversight by the California Coastal Commission. Caltrans' San Diego office, the San Diego Association of Governments, commonly called SANDAG, and the California Coastal Commission worked together to present a balanced transportation improvement project consisting of freeway, rail, and active transportation elements as well as habitat and coastal access enhancements.

The \$6 billion package preserves several hundred acres of natural habitat. The early stages of the program focus on rail improvements to make rail travel a more competitive option to heavily congested I-5. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities on freeway bridge overpasses will be improved, and

express/managed lanes on I-5 will be constructed. The toll fees, which will be generated through a FasTrak program, will be reinvested in transit projects in the corridor. This will allow the region to continue offering travelers transportation options.

"By integrating improvements, new opportunities were identified that otherwise would not have been possible if the projects were pursued individually," said Caltrans District 11 Interstate 5 Corridor Director Allan Kosup.

"Caltrans is confronted with the need to modernize our statewide transportation network while reducing the environmental impact of increasing capacity to match travel demand," he said. "Caltrans and SANDAG translated these challenges into opportunities."

The program's planning and coastal permitting process culminated August 2013 when the California Coastal Commissioners unanimously approved the North Coast Corridor Public Works Plan/Transportation and Resource Enhancement Program. The public works plan and enhancement program



is a long-term vision for mobility and environmental sustainability in the corridor. It acts as both the [North Coast Corridor Program's](#) master planning document and coastal permitting process. The public works plan streamlines a more traditional process that would have resulted in more than 80 separate Coastal Commission actions.

The North Coast Corridor Program is a historic approach to infrastructure and resource planning, in both the issues it addresses and the way it was conceived and developed. The public works plan and enhancement program's vision is one of balance, integration, and performance. The document includes performance reporting every four years to make sure project plans align with the needs of the region. This creates flexibility and accountability — further allowing Caltrans and SANDAG to respond to current needs in the corridor and future changes in land use, revenue, technology, and the environment.

This integrated, collaborative approach also resulted in several opportunities that will benefit coastal resources. One example is a part of the freeway widening where Caltrans needed to

replace the six I-5 lagoon bridges. Those bridges were constructed in the 1960s without the full understanding of how the bridge lengths would affect tidal flushing of the lagoons. As a part of the corridor program, Caltrans and SANDAG agreed to study lagoon bridge length and its effect on tidal flow. Together, they decided that three of the lagoons would benefit from longer I-5 bridges. In addition to longer bridges, improved bike and pedestrian facilities were incorporated into several bridge and retaining wall designs. These coastal resource enhancements would not have happened without Caltrans and SANDAG working together and including ideas from other project stakeholders.

“Without a doubt, the North Coast Corridor Program has ushered in a new generation for the department,” said Caltrans District 11 Director Laurie Berman. “Future projects will reflect the understanding that improved mobility is larger than a freeway. Coupling dynamic improvements in vehicular travel with increased rail options and better pedestrian and bike connections will be the rule of thumb rather than the exception.”

Source: Caltrans District 11

Preserving and enhancing the natural environment is a critical part of the I-5 North Coast Corridor at the San Elijo Lagoon



Photo provided by Southwest Strategies